

TMoaf OLD

by That Dastard Cerberus

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Summary: Cody wasn't looking for an adventure, but somehow she wound up getting, more or less, kidnapped by the Shinsengumi, has to suffer several attempts of kidnapping by Kazama, gets involved in a war when she'd rather hide under a rock, and all the while try to remember how she got into this mess in the first place and save the people she will soon call friends. New version up.

1. In which Cody becomes hopelessly lost

\*\*Title\*\*: The Misadventures of a Foreigner

\*\*Author\*\*: Cecil Kain Cerberus

\*\*Characters (central focus)\*\*: Hakuouki cast and the Lost Foreigner (OC).

\*\*Pairings\*\*: I honestly have no clue yet. X3 It's still undecided!

\*\*Rating\*\*: T, might change to M.

\*\*Warnings for the reader\*\*: \*\*Blood, violence, cursing, and general stupidity from our wayward heroine.

\*\*Setting\*\*: Hakuouki.

\*\*Summary\*\*: Cody wasn't looking for an adventure, but somehow she wound up getting, more or less, kidnapped by the Shinsengumi, has to suffer several attempts of kidnapping by Kazama, gets involved in a war when she'd rather hide under a rock, and all the while try to remember how she got into this mess in the first place and save the people she will soon call friends.

\*\*Length\*\*: No clue. We're shooting for the stars, folks.

\*\*Genre: \*\*Romance, adventure, humor, friendship, tragedy, you know the drill.

\*\*Disclaimer:\*\* I own nothing. Otomate and Idea Factory do. But if I did . . . well, let's just say some people would lose their sanity, while others would . . . erm . . . yeah.

\* \* \*

><p><em>\*\*\*In which Cody becomes hopelessly lost\*\*\*<em>

\* \* \*

><p>You know those stories where people are transported into another world in some ridiculous form? And then they go on those great, fantastic adventures with these characters, befriending them and crap like that? Those sort of adventures we all as kids wished would happen to us, hence why we push ourselves so close to TV, hoping it will suck us up into its carefree world, full of laughter and never ending excitement.</p>

Yeah. This isn't one of them. I'm not in some Looney Tunes show, playing Marco Polo with Daffy Duck and avoiding Elmer Fudd like a plague. I honestly would trade places instantly. Hell, I'd rather be trapped in Barney the Purple Dinosaur than here.

What is "here," you might ask? Wellâ€¦

To be perfectly honest, I haven't the foggiest. I'm guessing Japan, and by Japan, I don't mean the Digimon world version, or even the Godzilla version.

Nope, it is probably closest to the Rurouni Kenshin version. How can I tell, you might be wondering? Well, geez, I know I need glasses and it might be night time, but I ain't freakin' blind, I'll have you know!

Ahem, sorry, didn't mean to yell. I'm kinda on edge at the moment. Why? You all seemed to be full of questions, today. But if you must knowâ€"

"Hey! Get back here, you little bastard!"

That's why. Meet the Three Stooges. Okay, okay, they're not really the Three Stooges. I really wish they were, though. In fact, there's a lot of things I really wish were but, certainly, are not. Like not being alone in the dark, not being cold, not being chased, not not being at homeâ€"

I'm getting ahead of myself. Anyway, I was running for my life, and no, I'm not fleeing from Yosemite Sam. I really wish I was. At least I can trust an ACME anvil to fall on top of him. Really, I NEEDED that anvil. Idiots plus really sharp swords doesn't equal good news for me.

Ok, I really should be focusing more on the concept of running rather than making monologues in my mind. I can do that when I'm safe and sound in my bedroom, AWAY from these nutters.

Speaking of nuttersâ€|

"Come back!"

Pfft, like I'm gonna listen to a guy waving a sword at me? Okay, rhetorical question. Don't answer that. Either way, I'm not going back. Geez, and all because I had this stupid sword on my waist.

My fingers briefly brushed the handle of the katana by my side. I have no freakin' idea on how to use them, and according to Cracked, these were the worst weapons to use in a zombie apocalypse. Why? You'd have a better chance cutting yourself than actually killing anything. Hence why I didn't dare pull out this puppy and cut them a new one.

I jerked my body toward a turn, sprinting as fast as I could down the alley before making another 90 degree turn. I was actually pretty proud of myself; for a chick who could never run an entire mile without getting sick, this is excellent. Thank you, adrenaline rush. And thank you, endorphins.

My third turn in a row gave me a perfect opportunity. There were barrels, planks of wood, beautiful places to hide in. So I did what any sensible person would do; I hid behind a stack of wood that was leaning against a building. To help in the concealment, I tugged a barrel over in front of me, covering one side. The other side was still open, but I wasn't stupid or desperate enough to hole myself in. Peeking out of the opening with my back facing the barrel, I waited, resting on my haunches, listening.

There came footfalls, and I saw one of the creepers running down, growling under his breath. I almost giggled, but I quickly covered my lips. No good will come if I reveal myself, after all.

The guy pulled his sword, continuing to mutter something about a "brat." Twenty bucks says I was that "brat" he was talking about.

Either way, he walked slowly, trying to search everywhere for little o' me. So I ducked my head back inside my little sanctum and just waited for him to go away. I made myself as small as possible, something I can say a person like myself could do. Thank you, gymnastics. The one skill that never left me all these years.

When his footfalls started to get weaker, I continued to stay still, but I also allowed myself to peek over my shoulder, through the peephole that the barrel made. His shadow had retreated some feet away, with only his torso and head visible against the wooden exterior of the house. Breathing a soft sigh of relief, I let myself relax. Hopefully, things will start going as they should.

You know, this would be the perfect moment where the hero of the story rushes in and saves the damsel in distress. I can tell you quite clearly that I ain't no hero, and while being a damsel ain't the best option in the world, it sure a hell of a lot better than being dead, so I'd wager I'm the damsel. In those fantastic adventures in Loony World, all would end well with the hero saving me and riding me off into the sunset. Er, moonlight. Cuz I don't want to wait that long, or end up being tied to the tracks by some moustache fiend with a top hat.

So, what happens next? Well, ladies and gents, according to the natural law of "Life's-a-bitch-and-just-loves-screwing-with-every-damn-person-on-the-face-of-the-planet," I get royally screwed in the ass by the one sound I did not ever need to hear.

A man screaming.

You heard me right. A man screaming.

HOLYCOWONAHEAVENLYBARBIQUE, what the hell was that? I actually heard a scream? I'm the one being chased. Did the Three Stooges find some other hapless victim?

My answer was given with a resistant cry from another; "Damn you!"

Another cried out, "What is this?! Why don't you die?!" There were pants, grunts, and then finally, "Dammit! We gotta get out of here!"

Sounds of fighting began to fill the alley way, with the guy who had walked past me before ran straight back the way he came, past my hidy hole and straight into the fray. What was that idiot thinking?

The clash of metal against metal was loud, so loud it could rival the sound of my heartbeat. I had long since stiffened up again, scared out of my wits that I would somehow get dragged into this if I so as much made a peep.

More clang-clang of swords colliding. I could practically imagine the cold blades swinging through the air, cutting the wind with a sharp whistle as it approaches its target. Cries of anguish as the men fight, laughter from their foes.

Oh God, that laughterâ€|

Thenâ€|

A scream, laughing evil, a wet noise as the man's scream was cut short, and then finally, silence.

My heart stopped cold. My brain scrambled to understand what noises it just heard.

My God, I witnessed a murder. But the only difference between me and the victims of ID was that I didn't have the ability to call 9-1-1.

This had to be a joke. Some sick, twisted joke. Had I somehow gotten drunk when I was with friends, dragged onto a stage and made to look like a fool?

You know what? I hoped so. I honest to God hope so. I'd rather be furious at friends for this sick joke than it being real.

Oh God, please let it not be real, let it not be real, let it not beâ€"

My eyes, having gone wide in terror, saw the silhouettes of what

appeared to be men. But the action they were committing was far from human. Down came the thin shadow of the sword, cast upon the wall by moonlight. Deep into the body, no, the corpse of the man who had fallen.

But it was not the shadows that haunted me so dearly.

No, it was the noise. The sound of swords cutting people up.

I heard it all. The soft slip of the thin blade penetrating the skin, the cracking of bone against metal, and, as my imagination took hold, the wet noise of blood oozing from the body with each strike.

I covered my mouth, trying not to vomit. The bile was rising up in the back of my throat as I heard the screaming of the dying and the sick, wet sound of a body being pierced over and over again. But nothing was worse than the horrible, Joker-worthy laughter coming from the killers. Dare I call it laughter? It didn't even sound human, just madness.

Nothing but madness and death.

The other two had met the same fate as their friend. Death had come to this dark alley, with me as its sole, sane witness. Keep calm, I repeated to myself over and over. Do not freak out. Whatever you do, do NOT freak out unless you want to be Dead Victim #4!

The laughter died down to chortles, and thankfully, the cutting sounds disappeared. That was over, but now I was stuck here, near these homicidal maniacs. I knew there was more than one. But I didn't know how many. Were there two, three, six? God forbid anything above two. And please let them be short. Not exactly helpful, but at least my longer legs might be able to outrun them.

Might be.

My imagination was now working overtime. I began to imagine the freaks outside, even going as far imagining one of them sticking their heads into my little peeping hole. I didn't even know what they looked like, yet my oh-so-wonderful creativity filled in the gaps with gut retching monsters with fangs, claws, and glowing eyes.

Please dear God, let them just be sociopaths. Not zombies. Anything but zombies! I'll even take the sparkling pixies from *Twilight*â€”

Wait, what was that smell? My breaths were shallow and quick, but as the scent filled the still air, I came the horrible realization that it was blood I was smelling. The metallic odor of copper.

I was trembling. My spine was stiff, eyes ready to pop out, ears straining, nostrils flaring, and the icy tingle of fear continued to spread. My hands were still covering my mouth, but I knew the moment I moved, I'd make some kind of noise. Just stay quiet and don't move a muscle. And whatever I do, DO NOT PANIC!

The seconds dragged on for what felt like hours. I heard the faint, uneven steps of the creatures outside, giggling as they left, not daring to move a muscle. I wouldn't move. No, I couldn't move. I was

too stricken with fear. I had no idea if I could outrun these things. I had no idea what they even wear. I wasn't an athlete. It was mostly just a stroke of luck I managed to get away the first time. My wit couldn't save me, my legs couldn't save me, this useless hunk of metal on my hip couldn't save me.

I couldn't save me.

Tears began to well up in the corner of my eyes. I was trapped. There was nowhere to go. I could only wait until they left. Suddenly, my morbid sense of humor kicked in; Monster, monster, go away. Never come back another dayâ€"

CLUNK!

Oh-my-god-oh-my-god-oh-my-god-oh-my-god-oh-my-god-OHMYGOD-I'm-going-to-die! was all that went through my brain as every part of me tensed. My right foot, which had long ago fallen asleep, had jerked out, perhaps due to my posture or what have you, kicking the boards down. But suddenly, the air was no longer still, but sparking with animalistic excitement.

My head had by then turned, looking directly at the faces of the killers I had only moments ago heard. Three of them. Blue coats clad their bodies, drenched in blood. Wide, evil smiles cracked their stained faces. White hair and red eyes. One even went as far as to lick his lips.

This was it. Do-or-die. Fight-or-flight. Can you guess which I chose?

My legs needed no command. My body needed no driver. I was suddenly on my feet and out, flying through the air with almost inhumane speed, my sensors suddenly sharper and more acute than ever before. I knew they were behind me, but I didn't care.

My legs had wings. I was faster than them. I could escape.

I turned for a heartbeat, to look at my pursuers. They were far behind, but still laughing. I could make it, I could make itâ€"

And then it all came to a crashing halt when I ran head first into a warm body. I had only looked away for a moment, but perhaps with my speed, that moment covered a mile.

The force of my collision sent the person down with me, but oddly enough, instead of shoving me off, an arm enclosed me, holding me close, my face buried into the shoulder of the person.

Another heartbeat, and I heard steel being drawn. I tried to turn my head, but the angle I was at limited my vision greatly. Plus, the guy, as I definitely knew because of the chest, was already beginning to get up, carrying me with him. When he had finally sat up, I took that moment to turn my head and behold the horror behind me.

A man, with his sword drawn, faced the opponents, the cold steel blade practically glowing with bluish moonlight. In a split second, his sword screamed across the air, red flying all around him as the three monsters flew back.

It was then I realized that it wasn't red ribbons or clothing, but blood itself. The world suddenly blurred, turning gray, all the color gone. My body fell, dropping like a rock. Everything, from battle cries to screams were muffled, as if someone had jabbed cotton into my ears.

And then I saw white. Lots of white. It was suddenly brighter. Blurry faces were hovering over me, but I couldn't make out certain features. Nor could I understand what they were saying. Again, it was like cotton got jammed into my ears.

But before I knew it, everything went black, and I was out, left in the company of the strange people that would surely change my life.

For better or worse.

## 2. In which Cody becomes a lawyer

\*\*Warning: The following chapter contains obvious butchering of names. Cody has difficulty remembering names, so for the next few chapters, our beloved characters will be called nicknames until her inept skills catch up. ^-^\*\*

\*\*A quick guide;\*\*

\*\*Hijikata - Mr. Scary Looking Guy\*\*

\*\*Kondo - Spike\*\*

\*\*Inoue - Baldy\*\*

\*\*Sannan - Glasses\*\*

\*\*Sanosuke - Red\*\*

\*\*Heisuke - Kid\*\*

\*\*Shinpachi - Mr. Muscles\*\*

\*\*Souji - Troll\*\*

\*\*Saito - Bangs\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>\*\*\*In which Cody becomes a lawyer\*\*\*<em>

\* \* \*

><p>Remember when I said I was left in the company of some strange people who will change my life, for better or worse? I now know exactly which one.<p>

Worse. Very much worse. I don't care if that's not proper English. It was bad.

Somehow, I went from my normal, happy, everyday life to be pursued by

crazy people, which in turn were killed by even crazier people, which in turn were â€¢

Well, I wasn't conscious by then. However, I did wake up only to find myself gagged and bound like a hog.

I won't lie. I'm no morning person. It takes half an hour to make me realize I'm still sitting on my bed.

Still, waking up with hog tied does speed up the process.

Actually, it is rather a funny story on how I woke up. You see, I had this strange dream where I was stuck in Howl's castle with Sophie, and she was telling me how she used to be a young person until she took an arrow to the kneeâ€¢

Hey! Enough with the tomatoes! It was just a dream! My God, you guys can't take a joke, can you?

What's that? You want me to get on with the story? I will, if you stop playing the Monty Phyton's "Get on with it," scene. Now, let's see, where was I? Oh yeah, hog tied.

So, I woke up after my interesting dream, sorta expecting myself to be waking up tangled in my sheets on my bed in my dorm, with my roommate clicking off on her computer as usual.

Whelp, I got a rather rude awakening when I came to realize in my dense state of mind that I could not move freely, nor was I in my dorm room. Can you guess what happened next?

Yup, I panicked. I wiggled and wormed around all over the place, going even as far as rolling like an idiot. Once it became perfectly clear that I could not get free from my bounds (someone went to Boy Scouts), I decided to roll into a position, which happened to be my back, to get a better look at where I'm at.

Well, for one thing, this room wasn't a jail cell. It was empty, granted, but it looked, otherwise, fairly normal, what with the sun's brilliance lighting the room. Yup, just a plain, boring Japanese room.

Then again, I'm one to talk. Mentally, I bashed myself for being so stupid. I should have watched where I was going, I should have been aware of my surroundings, I should, I should, etc.

But who am I kidding? Being ungrateful and bashing myself won't get me anywhere. I need to be thankful that I'm still alive and hope that my knight in shining armor is coming to rescue me.

Thankfully, I wasn't left like that, wallowing in my self pity. Some guy who looked like he had premature balding issues came inside, startling me to the point where I nearly jumped right out of my skin. He looked normal, not dressed funky or anything, and he even seemed to appear very friendly, wearing a warm smile on his thin face.

I guess I should be happy to see a friendly face here. Considering my trauma from last nightâ€¢

Nope! Bad memories! Not gonna think about it, not gonna think

aboutâ€"

"Ah, you're awake." He knelt down next to me. "My name is Inoue Genzaburo. I apologize for all this. However, I need to roll you over so I can undo your binds."

I nodded, wanting so desperately to get out of them. Rolling onto my stomach, I felt the guy's hands quickly undo my bindings, although I did catch him murmuring something about a personâ€"whose name I couldn't catchâ€"before finishing.

"You can take that out of your mouth."

I spat the cloth out, coughing and sticking out my tongue in protest. Yuck, it tasted nasty. Like guy sweat. Eww.

Suddenly feeling a hand on my shoulders, I turned to look at the guy (I'm not so good with names, having forgotten his moments earlier, so I guess I'll just call him Baldy until I can remember), who had some rope in his hands. "I'm going to need to ask you hold your hands out, now."

Ah, okay. I'm still a prisoner. Tis fine, though. Nice place to be a prison. And nice guards, too. Unless this is all psychological tease just to mess with me. But whatever. Counting my blessing~

Although I did have to complain as he began to guide me out of the room. I mean, come on. Rope? What do these nutters take me for? Cattle? That can be taken as sexist, you know?

Well, anyways, the guy was talking, and I had oh-so-wonderfully got lost in my mind, sidetracking myself from the one-sided conversation. Paying attention now, I caught him mentioning something about a meeting and about my fate.

Oh right. My fate. Well, he didn't use the term "your fate" to me, but it might as well have been! Because by what I could catch, I was being put on trial for some crime (I don't know, j-walking?) and the group of people deciding my fate needed to hear me to get my testimony.

Thing was, the more I looked around, the more this place screamed "ANCIENT JAPAN." Which meant that the likelihood of our versions of justice being similar wasn't high. So, he was basically leading me to my deathbed.

Standing at the doorway to what could very well be my final moments of sunlight, Baldy turned to me with a warm smile and reassured me, "Don't worry. They might seem scary, but they are actually very kind."

Uh-huh. I see. Well, I just met ya, Baldy, and this is crazy, but I don't buy it, so please don't hate me.

Then he slide the door open, beckoning me to step towards my doom.

Okay, kinda. More like a primitive court room, what with a group of men sitting around in a semi-circular pattern, all turning to look up at me.

Trouble was I was having a hard time distinguishing who was the judge, the jury, and the prosecutor.

And I didn't have a freakin' lawyer, either. We're already off to a great start, eh?

Well, at least one thing is working in my favor. No zombies in sight. Yay.

Still, did they have to stare like that? It's not like I have something on my face! Right?

My eyes scanned the room before walking in. No doubt I was some kind of prisoner awaiting sentence. Why such the grim baritone? Well, you try being tied up after being hog tied, after being chased by maniacs with swords. This ain't no sun shine and rainbows, punk.

Before I got a chance to move inside, a voice caught my attention from below me, off to the side.

"Good morning! Slept well?" the voice said cheerfully. I turned my head towards the voice, looking down to the left where one of the guys was seated. He was young, handsome even, with chestnut brown hair tied up in one of those Japanese style dues (I don't know the names, so please don't sue me!) and green eyes. However, the moment I made eye contact with him, I got the sneaking suspicion that I wouldn't like him, as good looking as he may be.

Still, though, he had asked a question, so I decided to answer it. "If you think being hog-tied is particularly comfortable, then maybe. However, I for one am feeling stiff as a board, and I got a kink in my neck, if you care to know." I kept my words calm and level, removing the hard edge I otherwise would have spoken in.

His smirk widened a bit as he continued to address me, "Really?" He cocked his head to the side, adding, "Because when I went to check in on you, you didn't move a muscle, no matter where I poked."

Oh no, he didn't. I was about to ask him if sexual harassment was a-okay where he comes from (then again, this is JAPAN we are speaking of), but another guy beat me to the punch by saying to me, "Don't let him get under your skin. He's only teasing you."

I see. Well, in that case!

Turning to the guy who had, in a sense, defended me, I bowed. "I appreciate your words, sir. As for you," turning back to look at the guy with the Cheshire grin, "I would appreciate not making jokes that could lead to someone charging you with sexual harassment."

He only laughed. "I just wanted to have a little fun."

I grinned in response. "It's all fun n' games until someone cries, 'rape.'"

Suddenly, yet another voice interrupted us (my, these people have no mannerisms, hmm?) by saying, "Enough. Take a seat. We'll begin with the meeting." I nearly jumped again (okay, so I jerked, because that troll face laughed), turning to look at the three guys seated "up

front," I suppose you could call it, with one of them giving me this death glare. Despite the fact he could have been described as drop-dead gorgeous, what with his lavender eyes and jet black hair tied in a long ponytail, the look on his face gave me the shivers.

Oh, yeah. Scary dude. Don't fuck with him. Right-o.

My feet began to move when (how many people are here?!) some kid pepped up, "This kid is the witness? He's all skin and bones."

I'm skin and bones? Really, I think I'm chubbier than that. However, I looked up to see the kid who had addressed my appearance. I nearly laughed out loud. He was one to talk, being the shortest (by what I could see) and smallest of the bunch. In fact, he really was a kid, and THE kid, hence, I shall now dub him "Kid." Well, at least until I learn his name. If I survive.

Suddenly, my stomach dropped. The whole time Baldy had been talking to me, I got the feeling now he wasn't talking about the weather. I think he might have mentioned the names of these guys. Oh great, now that's real helpful.

One of the dudes sitting next to Kid snorted with laughter. "You calling him a kid? Take about the pot calling the kettle black, Heisuke."

The other guy seemed to agree. "Definitely. Compared to all of us, you're just another 'kid'." He even looked quite serious while stating this.

Kid pouted, glaring at the two other, and obviously bigger, guys. "Shut it, you old geezers."

The second dude glared back, flexing his well-built body into attack mode as he snapped in return, "The hell I will! You think you can get away with talking like that to me, runt?" Personally, I thought he was acting like a child, but then again, he had the appearance of a ruffian, what with the short, messy hair with a bandanna tied on his forehead, and his wardrobe that exposed certain parts, like the biceps and chest. Since he seemed so particular about his appearance, I decided to dub him Mr. Muscles. I thought it was fitting, at least.

The first guy, however, didn't seem as offended. I liked him. He merely chuckled and replied light-heartedly, "Well, I can't say the same for Shinpachi, but you can't exactly consider me 'old.'" This guy had more of a casual wave than Mr. Muscles, and although he exposed himself just as much as Mr. Muscles, it didn't appear as vain. His stomach was wrapped in a bandage, and his long red hair was tied in a ponytail. Red hair, huh? Red's a good color, not mention one of my favorite characters in Pokemon, so, since I liked him in so much, I dubbed him Red.

Mr. Muscles seemed to change gears AGAIN, turning this time to Red. "You bastard! You're selling me out!"

As I was thinking about the hothead getting his jamies all up in a bunch, Kid beat me to it by laughing back, "C'mon Shinpachi-san! Why would an adult get so angry over that?"

I would have laughed along, but there was the way the air was tense, the glances they passed at me, just the general feel of the place, that prevented anything from coming out. A normally cheery person like me suddenly felt strange and foreign.

I guess these guys aren't happy about me being here. Although, hey, neither am I. Feeling's mutual.

"I apologize for the behavior." I turned again (boy, am I doing a lot of swinging today) to see one of the three men, this one having large glasses and shoulder length brown hair (who will now be dubbed Glasses), looking at me, while the other two seemed to bear a slightly (well, the scary looking guy was glaring) annoying look at the three. He gave me a warm, welcoming smile, similar to Baldy's, although I got this weird feeling in my gut at the same time. "Please," he beckoned, "don't let their rowdy behavior frighten you."

The scary looking guy turned to Glasses, smirking slightly. He actually didn't look all the scary now. "Are you joking? You're the scariest of us all, Sannan-san." The rest of the room seemed to agree with him, because through my peripheral vision, I noticed them all nodding. Ooooh-kay?

Glasses responded by a light tone, "Oh? Now that's rather cruel, Hijikata-kun. While I can understand their feelings, to think that our demon of a commander would think the same!"

"You're lucky to have such a friend, Toshi." The final guy who had yet to say anything finally spoke up. Everyone seemed to calm down and look up at him, and then it finally came to me that this guy was the head-hancho.

"Well, then. Let us begin with introductions. I am Kondou Isami, leader of the Shinsengumi." The man who had spoken, younger than the guy who untied me, was dressed in traditional Japanese wear. His hair was kept up, save for his bangs, which were cut short. He seemed pleasant enough at first, but I wasn't buying the act.

After all, he might be playing the good cop/bad cop route. I've seen the movies.

â€| Okay, okay. Bad reference. Don't judge, kay?

The man only got into introducing two of his men when the not-so-scary guy interrupted him by saying, "Kondo-san, why are you offering him this information?"

Blinking in confusion, the head-hancho asked in kind, "Is it a bad thing?" Okay, I'll give this guy credit. If he is faking the whole thing, he is the World's Best Actor and deserves a Grammy. Then again, it was probably better that way. I had already lost track of their names. I love how my brain works sometimes. Still, though, I needed to come up with suitable nicknames for everyone, otherwise I would never keep track of them. So, with affection, I do humbly dub this idiot Spike.

â€| So what if I watch My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic? I used to watch the old cartoon, too! I like horses! Don't judge!

Mr. Muscles broke me out of my mental rant by saying, "Well, unless we want to give this kid more info than he should know, you need to keep your mouth shut."

Kid agreed. "Why bother? It's not like we owe him anything."

I owe them? Sure, yeah, like hog tying me and then pretending to sexually harass me, and let's not forget the fact I'm being held for some dumb, idiotic reason. But wait, my ears keep catching a word I know is wrong. Maybe I should pay attention better? Ummmmâ€|

I have ADHD, okay?! Sheesh! Can't I get some slack here?

Red's laughter broke me out of my trance again. Focus, Cody! I thought to myself as I listened carefully to Red's reply. "Yeah, but it's not like that's hurting us. Telling him our names and all."

Wait a cock-picking-minute. Did he just refer to me as aâ€"

Spike cleared his throat in embarrassment. "Umm, Saito-kun, can you tell us what occurred last night?"

"Last night," spoke the guy who had defended me from the troll earlier, "some failed warriors encountered some ronin. A fight ensued, but we were able to stop it."

A fight? Try massacre. I kept hearing the men's screams as they were being bludgeoned to death. I was only grateful that I didn't see anything. However, glancing by at the guy as he continued with his brief summary, I had to be grateful. If it wasn't for him, I would be dead now. Still, I just forgot his name, so I decided to dub him Bangs for the moment, although I did make a mental note to thank him later.

Why Bangs? Because of his long, dark hair, of course! It got in his face a lot, or at least hid it. Although I can't see why he would? He has such pretty blue eyes.

Just then, Bangs turned to look at me. "This one witnessed the encounter."

Spike turned to me. "Is that true, child? Did you see the fight?"

My voice got caught in my throat. My eyes drifted around the room, looking at each of their facial expressions. Something tells me if I answer this wrong, my head's going to gallows. Everything rode on my answer. I had to put in the right words, at the right time, with the right facial expressions. In other words, lie through my teeth.

No pressure, right?

I gulped. "Iâ€"" I cleared my throat, trying to get rid of the frog that had kindly lodged in my throat. Just thinking of being killed did not help. "I didn't see anything."

That was true. I didn't see anything. I never got a good look at whatever those creatures were. I only got a brief glance the creatures, but then again, their features had completely escaped my

mind. Now you see why witness testimony can suck so bad at times? I couldn't even describe them even if you tickled me with a feather. And I am very ticklish!

Yet still, there was one thing I did remember, and that was the cold, maniacal laughter. I resisted the urge to shiver at the memory. Better to forget. Forgetting is what I do best, yup yup yup.

"I see." Kid's dark green eyes looked directly into my eyes. "So you're sure you saw nothing."

I don't know who was with me last night, but I think Bangs was, by the sounds of it, and he had yet to call my bluff. So I pressed on. "I didn't see anything." I hoped they would believe me. Women are excellent liars, because, unlike men, we knew all about facial expressions and tones. So as long as I didn't break eye-contact, didn't lose confidence, and didn't touch any part of my face or neck, I would be fine.

And then Mr. Muscles drew my attention by calling my bluff.

"Hold on a moment. Souji said you were helping our guys out or something like that." The moment those words left his lips, everyone's faces darkened. They thought they had a liar. Great, fantastic. Remind me to put this â€œ| somebody on my Kill List.

"I didn't!" I cried. "I don't even remember what helped last night! Really!" My desperation was clear on my facial features, I'm sure. But still, I couldn't get out of this mess unless I came cleanâ€"somewhatâ€"with what happened last night. Here goes nothing.

Sighing, I sat down. "While I don't remember exactly what happened," I stated, my legs crossing, "I can give you the gist of it. Just don't ask for details or locations or times or even descriptions, kay? I got chased by some crazy nutters down an alley. I found a place to hide, and then, right when I think things are looking up, I hear this crazy laugh and â€œ| My hands curled into fists, placed on top of each other, like I was holding a sword, "SWISH! SLASH-SLASH! Someone called Hannibal Lector and Joker to the party, and the," I paused. How would I describe those three dudes who were chasing me? I shrugged, giving the generic, "guys were dead as roadkill."

I looked around through my peripheral vision. Everyone seemed to be taking what I had to say seriously. That was good. No OBJECTIONS or HOLD IT coming out. I continued, seeing no reason to stop. I even added gestures to sweeten the deal. "I wait until the â€œ| I don't know, Joker-wannabes, leave, before I make like a bee and buzz off. Unfortunately, my leg picks this exact moment to fall asleep. Next thing I know, I'm running like my feet are on fire away from the crazies, I run into someone, don't know who, and â€œ| My brow furrowed.

Spike leaned forward. "And?" he asked, not unkindly.

I shrugged. "I don't remember. Red, white, then black. That's it. Then I wake up and find myself hog tied and on the floor. Honestly, I don't even know what's going on."

"So, in other words, you saw those ronin get cut up?" Mr. Muscles

asked.

The air was still again. Whatever points I got for acting out my story, it all crumbled with this one question. Great, just great. I shoot myself in the foot with that one. But if I reminded quiet, they would think worse than they already have. It was do-or-die!

again.

"I didn't 'see' anything," I responded, putting more emphasis on the word. "But if you count hearing, then yes, I heard it. But I have, again, no idea what the hell was going on. I can't describe to you anything, no details, physical appearances, nada."

"Still," Red interjected, his yellow eyes cast down, "even if you didn't see directly, you witnessed everything. The entire ugly business."

Mr. Froggie moved up, blocking any retorts my mind was trying to form. I honestly could think of a lot. But my mouth wouldn't move.

Red once again intervened, giving me an earnest look while saying softly, "You have an honest heart. You know, that's not necessarily a bad thing. However!"

I couldn't make sense of this. No, my brain wouldn't make sense of any of this. All I could utter was, "I won't tell! Promise!"

God, I sounded like a five-year-old being told a secret. Only this five year old was about to get her head chopped off.

"Still," Glasses stated calmly, "even if you vow to keep it a secret, you owe us nothing. If you were to be captured and interrogated, you would tell. I doubt you could withstand torture."

"As Sannan-san had said, there is no reason to hold our secrecy above your safety," Bangs added in.

The troll, his smile lessened but still ever present, gave his own two cents. "It's not like we're guaranteed your silence. It wouldn't be very smart to just let you go."

Turning to the others, he crossed his arms while leaning back slightly. "Come on. Just get a blade out. That's how we make sure no information is leaked."

My tongue might have well be chopped off, because I could no longer speak. I was too frozen with fear to. These people were casually talking about my death. About me dying! I don't want to die! I didn't want to die now!

Suddenly, Spike, that brilliant, brilliant and wonderful man, spoke up for me. "Souji, don't be so cold. This is a civilian we are talking about."

That got the troll hard. He had lost his will to smile, instead taking the time to look at the floor, his hand rubbing the back of his neck. "I was only joking, Kondo-san," he murmured. "Don't give me that look. C'mon."

Oh sure, buddy, you were joking. Joking about one's life, that's classic, real funny.

Bangs seemed to agree with me. "Then how about making it sound like one?" he asked coarsely, which caused the troll (okay, I'm just gonna call him Troll from now on, since that's all I can come up with) to redden in his face. Whether out of anger or embarrassment, I did not know, but I'll be honestâ€"it was so wonderful to see this change of events.

Baldy interjected, and he, like Spike, seemed to have a similar opinion on the matter. "Surely there is something we can do. I mean, this is a child we're talking aboutâ€!"

Actually, I'm nearly twenty-wait, how is that piece of information gonna help me?!

Glasses spoke up this time, stating, "I honestly have no wish to kill him either, but we can't discount the problems of letting him go will cause. However, I would like to hear the commander's opinion on the matter."

Well, you're either on one side or the other, buddy, so I would appreciate you make a decision and pick one! Preferable my side. And wait, how am I aâ€"

"Last night," the not-so-scary looking guy, who was now kinda looking intimidating, "we killed some guys who broke the code. This kid was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Yes, yes! Finally, some sense to this madness!

"And I imagine that is all you believe happened?" Glasses asked.

Shrugging, the not-so-scary looking guy replied, "Well, he probably saw something, but I doubt he knows what it means. By the sounds of it, he's entirely confused on the matter and has forgotten most of what happened."

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! See, eye witness testimony is bull! I knew it! All my time spent watching Investigation Discovery has finally paid off!

"Still, though," Mr. Muscles, who I was really beginning to hate, said, "this is serious. I mean, we got enough things to worry about. We can't have this getting out. It wouldn't do well for the Shinsengumi's image if a rumor got out that we got men who are thirsty for blood."

Red, with his arms crossed over his chest, merely stated, "While Souji's got a point, I'll do whatever Kondo-san and Hijikata-san want."

Kid, for all his stupidity, actually said something smart. "I think we should let 'im go." Yes, yes, let me go home. Back in my dorm, away from you people, and far away from the Joker goons. Please! "It's not like he knows why they went nuts, right?"

Eh? Como-say-what-now? 'Make them go nuts?' I thought they already

were nuts.

Seems like someone is sharper than Kid over here. The not-so-scary guy was looking pretty frightening right now. Hello, Mr. Scary Looking Guy. "Shut it, Heisuke," he growled.

Kid immediately covered his mouth, eyes wide in embarrassment. Troll merely sighed and said, "Oh geez, it's gettin' harder and harder to let you go."

Kid, just do me a favor. Shut. The hell. Up.

And then, to make matters worse, Mr. Muscles just had to open his trap. "A man's gotta be ready to face death. You should make peace with yours."

Hang on! I thought. You're making it sound like I'm about to die! And why the hell do you think I'm a man? Do I look like a man to you? Are you blind as well as stupid? Oh, how I wish I could say those words. But alas, my tongue was still having a strike and Mr. Froggie was starting a family.

My life officially sucks. Oh, and I never want to hire myself out as a lawyer ever again.

Red seemed to have peeked up a bit, stating, "True. A brave death is always an option. When I was young, I committed seppuku."

Yes, and you also failed, because you're still here. Oh? You're wondering how I know about honorable suicide? Well, I can tell you while I might not know much, I sure as hell know enough. Now back to our regularly scheduled program.

Mr. Muscles seemed to agree with me, because he lightly jabbed back, "It sure didn't stick, though, did it, Sano?"

I got to say, I have a morbid sense of humor sometimes. Like right now. God, if I wasn't in this situation, I would be right there laughing with them.

"Hijikata-san," Bangs interrupted, "since we cannot agree on this matter yet, shall I take the child back to his room?" While stating those words, he glanced over at me. Strangely, I could almost understand his reasoning. He didn't want me to hear anything else.

I guess now I had to thank him twice.

"Very well," Mr. Scary Looking Guy sighed. "Can you take care of it?" Bangs nodded.

Smiling humorlessly, Glasses added in, "I agree with the idea. There are too many careless men here."

Mr. Muscles seemed to be one of them. "Hey, Sannan-san, why're lookin' at me?"

Red smirked. "Well, that's pretty obvious. We're in charge of being careless. Especially Heisuke."

Kid shouted in response, "H-hey! Knock it off! It was a mistake,

okay?"

Right when I thought Kid had issues, he turned to me and mumbled in a voice that I barely heard, "S-sorry."

Everyone makes mistakes. I hated the idea of disliking him, especially when he was on my side. But my body was still tensed up. I could only nod and give a weak smile in return.

In the end, it wasn't his fault.

"Shall we go?" Bangs asked, touching my shoulder. I nodded again, not daring to speak.

As the door closed and we began to walk back to the room I was in before, I felt my wit so returning to life. Guess that meant the jury is about to draw a verdict. Did I play my lawyer's role well enough? Could I even appeal my case if they found me guilty of whatever crime they thought I committed?

â€œ I really need to stop watching Investigation Discovery.

Reaching the room, he lightly pushed me in. It wasn't meant to be rough, but it had enough force to get me down on my weakened knees. Offering me one piece of advice, Bangs said, "For your sake, try to imagine the worse. It might not go in your favor."

Crossing my arms and legs with a pout, I retorted, "For my sake, I hope the dudes in charge have half a brain. Come on! I don't even know what I did wrong! How is that justice if I don't have a clue what's happening?!"

Bangs frowned, his eyes narrowing. "It does not matter whether you did anything wrong. The fact is you witnessed something you should not have seen. And that information cannot be leaked out."

"Oooooh," I snorted ruefully. I was actually surprised by my boldness, but I couldn't keep quiet about it much longer. My whole body was trembling, but this one-sided fight had lasted way too long. This guy was walking on forbidden grounds now. "I'm sorry. I didn't know you guys ran a Men-in-Black operation here. Next time, I'll remember to not be in the wrong place at the wrong time! Oh yes, why don't I next time ask the creeps who were chasing me, 'Oh, please don't chase me. I don't want to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Perhaps we can reschedule this little chase some other time?' Or maybe if I do get in the wrong place at the wrong time, I'll say, 'Oh please, good sirs. I'm not supposed to see you. Can you please go into another area, or allow me to depart?' Yes, or better yet, hit me with a two-by-four so I completely forget! I'll get amnesia and won't remember squat, but hey, your secret is well kept, whatever it is!"

Bangs didn't react at all to my sarcastic rant. He just watched me, reminding quiet before asking, "Are you done?"

I gnawed my teeth. "If you bastards didn't have swords, I'd totally knock your lights out." Bangs once again didn't react, merely shutting the door behind him, leaving me alone to my own thoughts.

### 3. In which Cody attempts a daring escape

\*\*\*In which Cody attempts a daring escape\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>My body was still shaking, but it was only the lull that I realized I was crying. I touched my cheeks with my bounded hands, feeling the cool wetness on my warm cheeks. Choking a sob, I fell back on my back, letting it all come out in one swoop.</p>

I didn't get how I got here. I didn't get how I got chased into that particular street, only to seeâ€"well, I still had no clue on what I sawâ€"and now I'm stuck, awaiting my death sentence, over a bloody accident that wasn't my fault. In that moment, I reflected upon all that was said to me, and in my bitter state, came back with every quick and witty reply.

You asked me if I saw anything, and I didn't. I only heard screaming, laughing, cutting blades, more laughing. You tell me how that's information being leaked. I don't have a freakin' clue what the hell is going on, so I see no reason why I gotta sit here on Death Row for a crime I didn't commit!

Okay, let's use your reasoning over the torture, then. Say I have no reason to hold my tongue if someone holds me at gunpoint. Fine, you got that much right. But, consider this. One, who's gonna hold me at gunpoint? I'm a kid. I don't look like much. I'm new here, I have virtually no face in this one horse town, so, really, my chances of getting picked up by â€| I don't know, green Martians, is lower than your chances of getting struck by lightning. Two, I don't plan on sticking around. I got places to go, people to see, and things to do. So I can say no one here can state they'll be seeing me anytime soon. Three, and this is very important, I. Have. No. Idea. Who. You. People. ARE!

Facing a brave death? Ooooh, how considerate. Do you plan on using my skin for a canoe, because if so, I'd like to request a fork.

And why keep calling me a man? Do men of this time period not have functional eyes? Because I pity the women you do end up sleeping with. In fact, next time, check the bed. If it is stiff or furry, I think you need your eyes checked. Any straight man with half a brain would know I'm a woman. I have boobs. Big bouncy, jiggly, squeezable, curvy breasts that you sick fuckers like to squeeze and oogle over.

As I continued my mental rage quest, time seemed to pass slowly in this Godforsaken place. I may be enjoying the last moments of my life, for all I know. These people had warp senses of justice.

But you know what sucks? The fact that I could use none of this material on them, when I was facing them. But at the end of the day, I was a freakin' coward, and I know that. Sure, I might be witty and snarky in my internal monologues, but that sums up to not if I don't say anything.

I looked down at my hands. My eyes were most likely red, after all the crying, my head hurt from all the logical fallacies I got hit

with, I was sore from being hog tied, and I just didn't have the greatest mood in the world at the moment. Sighing, I let my body fall down on the floor, and I just laid there.

And you know what? Who the hell cares? I'm marked for death. It's over. Game over. End the line, time to cash in my check, get off the train, and start pushing up some daisies. I didn't want it to end, but apparently that doesn't matter at the end of the day. At the end, my life is but a candle to be snuffed out by some jackasses who couldn't tell the difference between a chick and a dude.

My hands clapped my cheeks quickly. Come on, kiddo. No need for negative thinking. That never got anyone anywhere. In fact, instead of just giving up, I need to come up with a plan.

Like escaping. If I'm marked for death, I gotta get out of here before O' Grim comes with his big ass scythe.

Still, escaping didn't seem possible, since, well, these guys are skilled swordsmen, and this is their headquarters, which means they have guards here, unless they're incredible stupid. And as much as I tell myself they're morons for misjudging me, they aren't stupid in that retrospect.

And there was that one tiny detail I had to figure out.

Where the hell am I?

If this was a TV, the protagonist of the story would look at the camera and say, "Oh fuck."

Yup, break the Fourth Wall. Like a boss.

Okay, enough for the contrived memes. I have a job to do, and that is escaping. Only problem is figuring out where the eject button is.

I stood up, glaring at the screen door. If I opened this door, what was waiting for me behind it? Samurai? A mom and pop biker gang? Hey, maybe if I'm really unlucky, a zombie mob!

I jerked away from the door, clicking my tongue. Really, I can't let stupid things like that occupy my thoughts. Oh sure, they're amusing thoughts, but none of them can save me here. I needed a plan, and fast.

After musing for a few seconds, I stopped, continuously hitting that devilish metaphorical wall. None of my plans would work, mostly because they all somehow involved a traveling circus monkey and a clown named Bilbo. And since neither were nearby, I can to reside to the fact that none of those plans would work.

Just when it seemed my plan to escape looked like it would fall through the cracks, I was hit with one insane plot.

Really, how hard was it reasoning with a bunch of swordsmen? I mean, Glasses and Baldy were perfectly reasonable, and I already had a few in favor of keeping me alive.

Plus, didn't these goons have something against killing women and children? I don't remember, but I just remember swordsmen have this

honor code thingie that prevents them from slaughtering the innocent, and somehow that always included women and children.

If I corrected the small detail on me being a guy, maybe they'd spare me? I mean, come on, women are like, stupid back then. No one paid us females any mind. My boobs might just save my hide in this case.

On the other hand, they somehow confused me with a guy, meaning, judging by the clothing I noticed on my person, I was disguised as one. Why, I have no idea. I might have been drunk.

Well, now that I magically joined the cross-dressing club, maybe I could just explain it away that, hey, I didn't want to get raped. Makes perfect sense, right?

Opening my mouth, with my plan ready to be set in motion, I hollered through the paper thin walls, "HELLLOOOOOOOOOOOOO? CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?!"

The response was almost immediate, with suddenly my door sliding open and a bunch of men sticking their heads in.

Wow, that was fast. And easy, too.

Mr. Scary Looking Guy, having his grrr face on, crossed his arms, purple eyes narrowed at me. "Well? You called us. Do you have something to say?"

Oh how tempting it would have been to say, 'Nope, just checking the security system here.' But I'm trying not to die here, so I held that back.

"Why, yes," I replied back, plastering the biggest, cheesiest grin I could muster in this situation. "I actually thought maybe there were some things you should know before you decide my fate. You know, to make things as fair and clear as possible."

Bangs, ever the cool and stick-in-the-mud, gave me a doubtful look. "You can try, but I doubt anything you say will change the situation."

My fake smile fell immediately from my face, replaced with a hard set line. I wonder if he'd think the same if I said I was royalty? I'm not, but that would be hilarious if I was and mentioned that as a bit of info dump. Oh so tempting, but no, no, trying to live here.

Kid, the one I thought was on my side, stated solemnly, "You probably should make peace with yourself."

I nearly reeled. Talk about one eighty here! Wow, was I too late? I turned to Red, the other guy who seemed to at least pity me, and he smiled in response.

"A man needs to face death honorably. Don't be afraid."

Oh, oh. So this is it? Huh, they practically made up their minds. I looked around, seeing everyone's hard faces, ready for the final verdict. The realization hit me like a train, and slowly, I sank down to the floor, miserable all over again.

They won't listen to a word I say. Even if I was royalty, they'd probably just end me here. Yup, this is the end of line for me. The short and hellish life of Cody was finally coming to its final chapter. Oh sweet life, to live or die, that is the question I don't get the opportunity to ask myself because a bunch of jackasses are asking for me.

Grinding my teeth furiously, I growled, the rage finally boiling over, "Well, since it's apparent you douchebags have already made up your minds, why not just kill me now? Pat yourself on the fucking back, you just killed some random kid on her merry way through life. After all, who cares about the brat who doesn't understand what the fuck is going on? Where am I? What is my life? Oh, that's right! I haven't a fuckin' clue, because some retard just up and kidnapped me for trying not to die, like any reasonable human being! I don't even know who you people are, and here we all are, deciding my fate. Talk about stranger danger! I should have stayed home yesterday. Oh wait, again, how silly of me, I have no idea how I ended up here either! What a twist!"

Panting, my rambling finally ceased, I looked around, glaring angrily at everyone. Then I noticed something was wrong.

Everyone was looking at me as if I had grown a second head. Was it something I said? I examined what I had just blurted out, mulling over each word when it, too, hit me.

Oops.

"You," Kid paused, shaking his head before leaning forward a bit, "you don't know who we are?"

"Well, geez," the troll sighed, scratching the back of his head, "I thought the blues would give it away."

"Blues?" I asked aloud, not even realizing it myself. Again, shocked expressions.

Mr. Scary Looking Guy glanced around the room, then to me, meeting my gaze. "We'll talk further about this. It appears we haven't gotten the whole story."

\* \* \*

><p>Guess who's back on the witness stand? Uh-huh, that's me, that's right. Oh yeah. Everybody celebrate!<p>

"This time," Mr. Scary Looking Guy barked, breaking me out of my silent cheer, "tell us the entire story."

"Okay." I cleared my throat before beginning, "At the beginning there was nothing. And then there was a huge explosion, followed by star particles flying through the spaceâ€" "

"What, no!" Mr. Muscles interrupted. "Hijikata met your story, not â€| uh, whatever you're telling."

"You mean the Dawn of Time?" I answered. I shrugged again. "Fair enough. That version would have taken too long. So, my story begins when my mom and dad decided to get together andâ€" "

"The events!" Mr. Scary Looking Guy spat. "Your telling of events!"

I laughed. I couldn't resist. "Hey, you asked for the entire thing. You never specified what entire thing." I grinned, looking around.

A few snickers here and there, but other than that, all business. I waved my hands in front of me sheepishly. "Okay, okay, I'll play nice. I just wanted to have a little fun."

I cleared my throat again, dislodging Mr. Froggie and his grandchildren permanently. "So, I'll try to fill in as much as I can, but obviously there are holes I don't remember, so, yeah.

"A couple days ago, me and some of my buddies were working on aâ€¢" Wait, should I tell them everything? Obviously this is some ancient world, different from my own. Telling them about the future would be a huge no-no, "project, we'll call it. Something our tutor wanted us to do for," did they have school in this time period? "our education. Everything was going fine, but I wasn't feeling too well, so I decided to excuse myself from the group."

Okay, everyone's facial expressions are observant, like they're hanging on every word I'm saying. Good. No looks of growing a second head yet.

"When I arrived home, I decided to relax by," can't mention video games here, "playing a little game. Something light hearted and didn't require much mental work. So here I am, minding my own business when it starts storming.

"After some issues with â€¢ leaking," metaphor for power outage, "I continued with my game whenâ€¢"

"When what?" Glasses asked, no unkindly. He looked at me, and I shrugged. "When what is a good question. That's a hole I don't remember."

"Well," Mr. Muscles jumped in, egging me on, "what do you remember next?"

"Running from the three Stooges and then being attacked by some thingies."

Bangs frowned. "That is a very large hole you claim to not remember anything from."

I shrugged. "I know my memory isn't perfect, but you're right. It IS too big of a hole. Problem is that is just how it is. I can't remember how I went from being home one moment and being on the street the next."

"So where do you live?" Spike asked.

I hesitated. "Uhhh, not here." I gave a sheepish grin in return. In truth, I couldn't tell them I was from another country and, even worse, admit I'm from the future. This was not looking good for little o' me.

"Child," Baldy comforted me. "Please, if we do not know the whole truth, we'll have to assume you're hiding something that could be too dangerous for us."

I didn't want to die, I knew that much. But would you people believe me if I told you the whole story? I don't think so. You might want me even more dead than before. Or worse yet, hand me over to your government and try to cut me open and examine me.

Oh, boy, what to do.

#### 4. In which Cody reveals the truth in song

\*\*\*In which Cody reveals the truth in the most theatrical method possible\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Well, this is do-or-die once more. Time to make my mommy and daddy proud.<p>

I hope.

\_ "Well, you want the whole truth\_

\_ And nothing but the truth,\_

\_ Let me tell you something,\_

\_ Let me say it to ya straight!\_

\_ This tale you're about to hear ain't a fake,\_

\_ A lie, nope, not even a fib!\_

\_ Nothing but the entire unadulterated truth!\_

\_ My little tale begins at school,\_

\_ University to be precise,\_

\_ Where the professor handed a task,\_

\_ Not a small one, in fact,\_

\_ To research the world and its stories\_

\_ Pick a time, any time and place\_

\_ Then, he told us, find something of fiction,\_

\_ Something fake, not true, yet historical based\_

\_ Make the connections, see if it holds water!\_

\_ That's just what I did, you see!\_

\_ I picked a small portable book called a visual novel!\_

\_Put it into my portable play station, PSP for short,\_  
\_Although I can't seem to remember what the game was called,\_  
\_I played it until I really can't remember.\_  
\_A power outage stopped my fun, ruined my sport,\_  
\_And now I'm suddenly here!\_  
\_Yes, here on this very spot,\_  
\_Among you and you and you.\_  
\_Now this tale does sound strange, but it's the truth,\_  
\_Nothing but the truth!\_  
\_I don't know who you are\_  
\_I don't know where am I\_  
\_Or even what year it is?  
\_Sad, isn't it?  
\_So please don't kill me!  
\_I haven't got a clue what's going on!  
\_Just knock me out,\_  
\_Drag me out back,\_  
\_And leave me there out in the weather.\_  
\_At least I have hope to get home.\_  
\_Hope that I so desperately need.\_  
\_Oh, and as a final note to conclude this song,\_  
\_Just to let you all in a little secret,\_  
\_I'm a girl!"

I flopped down, taking a deep breath. Wow, singing takes a lot out of someone.

No one said a word, which I didn't know if that was a good thing or not.

Finally, someone made a move. Mr. Muscles narrowed his eyes, examining me closely. "So let me get this straight. You're not from around here, don't know how you got here, know some pretty strange stuff, and you're a girl?"

I nodded. "Eyup."

Red smiled in response. "Sounds like Shinpachi doesn't believe a

word. Want me to strip her to get that out of the way?"

I opened my mouth, about to say, "I'm right here," but Spike beat me to the punch, with something else. "Absolutely not! We will not humiliate someone in such a way!"

You sure about that, Spike? You look pretty red in the face right now. Am I to believe you're trying not to embarrass yourself? I couldn't help it; I smiled. These guys were surprisingly taking this well. Or maybe they were screaming on the inside, but their warrior training wasn't allowing them to freak out.

Not that I'm complaining. Still, if I can prove one point right, they'll believe my other points. Err, hopefully.

I heard Troll sigh behind me. "You're kidding, right? This kid is obviously crazy. He just broke into song."

Might as well go all out, since they already think I'm crazy. I loosened the kimono, reaching inside and loosening the bandages I had somehow gotten on my chest. "See this?" I asked, finally releasing my breasts. I didn't remove the kimono, but the idea was very tempting. "These are my boobs. Here's your freakin' evidence that I'm female." I removed my hands from inside the kimono, jiggling my bosom from the outside for further proof.

Bangs looked away immediately, blushing. "You asked for it, Souji."

Troll didn't know what to say. His green eyes were so wide I wanted to laugh right then and there. Red, Mr. Muscles, and Kid were gaping at me, Mr. Scary Looking Guy wasn't looking all that intimidating with that rush of red on his face, Glasses was trying to look elsewhere in the room, Baldy, who had been quiet the entire time, was coughing awkwardly and looking down, and Spike. Poor Spike.

"Men like boobies, yes?" I tried and lightened the mood. "Well, straight men. You're all straight, right?"

Shaking his head, Red was the first to recover. "Well, that's one aspect we confirmed."

"Yes," I replied back. "So you can definitely count on the others being true. I mean, you have to, since so far everything I've been trying to tell you has been true."

He gave me a doubtful expression, to which I grinned back in return. "Well, you guys got doped by a chick. I don't mean to demean you all, but . . . that's kinda sad, doncha think?"

\* \* \*

><p>So, after moments of silence followed by all the men in the room calming down from my little flash affair, everyone got into a more serious mood to discuss serious, fucking, business!</p>

Well, it actually was serious business when talking about my lifeâ€| SHUT UP! I'm narrating this bit here!

So our manly men are busying themselves over the value of my life

after the realization that I am, indeed, female.

"It just feels wrong," Mr. Muscles kept murmuring. "I mean, you don't go killing women like that."

Mr. Scary Looking Guy wasn't buying it. "Gender is irrelevant."

Maybe, but I like thinking that I have a slight edge in surviving. Plus, if I were to take that statement out of contextâ€œ Ooh, I can hear the feminists scream blasphemy.

Glasses interrupted my gleeful thoughts with, "Killing is wrong period. There should be no discussion about this."

Glasses, have I ever told you I love you?

The troll, ever spoiling my fun, rebuttled, "But what about our little problem? We can't let information leak out. Plus, we still have no idea if the rest of this kid's story is true."

Yes, you can. You just need to believe in me! Believe you can fly! That you can touch the skyâ€œOh, I'm singing in my head again, aren't I?

Mr. Scary Looking Guy sighed, glancing around before looking at me. I try my best at making the saddest, most pleading face ever. Please, please, fall for the cute puppy dog eyes. You cannot resist, you do not watch to resist, resistance is futileâ€œ"

"This child simply appeared at the wrong place at the wrong time," he stated slowly, making sure everyone heard him. "She didn't witness anything, just merely saw a fight get out of hand."

Glasses smiled knowingly at Mr. Scary Looking Guy. "And that's all?"

The latter nodded. "Yes, that's all. This girl will live."

I was about to jump up for joy when he caught my eye, and I lowered my arms. "However, you will not be allowed to leave. You shall remain here, under our watch, until we can figure out exactly what to do with you."

My shoulders sagged a bit, but I had to remind myself, 'Hey, at least I'm not dead.'

Still, could this get any worse?

Jinxed.

... Shit.

A soft cough came from the corner of the room. I turned, looking at Kid curiously. He shifted uncomfortably before murmuring, "Soooo, what's your name, anyway?"

I merely blinked at him blankly. Introductions were normally at the back of my mind when meeting new people. Mostly because I sucked at remembering names. When I didn't answer immediately, Red gave me an

encouraging smile. "It would be nice if we knew what to call you."

Ah. Makes sense. Derr. Brain fart. I cleared my throat, stating, "My name is Cody. S'up?"

No one got that. And I dug a really stupid grave for myself.

Shit again!

## 5. In which Cody suffers from boredom

\*\*AN:\*\*

\*\*New chapter! And Cody's misadventures continue! Yay, nothing happens here! Boredom got her good.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>\*\*\*In which Cody suffers the plague of boredom, and then gives hell back\*\*<p>

\* \* \*

><p>Note to self. Never, and I mean NEVER, use slang around 19th century warriors. "Cody is an odd family name," Glasses murmured thoughtfully. "I do not believe I've ever heard of it."<p>

Somehow I felt he was trying to insult me. Fine, two can play at this game. "That's because it's not a family name. It's my firstâ€"" Wait, last names were first in Japan. "I mean, my given name."

"Oh." Kid tilted his head a bit. "So 'S'up' is your family name?"

I shook my head. "No, it's an abbreviation for 'What's up'."

The silence in the room was baffling to me. Then again, I need to remind myself, some of the terms I use might not have been invited yet. I sighed, then stated, "How are you doing?"

"Fine." Glasses still gave me this strange look.

I threw my hands up in frustration. "NO-NO! That's what 'S'up,' means! It's basically asking you how you've been."

"Oh."

"I'm getting a migraine. You people and your idiocy," was what I wanted to say, but I held my tongue as Mr. Scary Looking Guy stood up along with Spike. That must have been a sign for the others, because they followed suit. Baldy came to me and tied my wrists up like before, then led me down back to a room. I had no idea if I was being led into the same room or a different one, but at this moment I didn't care. I was tired and exhausted, and I really was developing a migraine.

"So now what?" I asked, sighing.

Baldy turned and gave me a gentle smile. "For now, you will remain in

this room," he said, gesturing to open doorway in front of us. It could have been the room I was momentarily held in, but I'm pretty sure every room in an old Japanese house look the same. At least to me, they seem like it. Then again, everyone looks the same to me. If it weren't for the nicknames, I would definitely be losing track of everyone.

Ah, wait, never mind. I'll probably forget everybody by tomorrow. Curse my poor short term memory.

However, Baldy gave me a clear location I needed to be in, so I stepped in and sat down. Smiling at me, he then said, "You'll have someone outside all hours. Don't worry; we weren't harm you butâ€"

"I shouldn't try escaping, right?"

"Yes, that would be preferable." This guy was asking so nicely. How could I not agree?

Okay, okay, so maybe I'm not the sharpest knife in the draw. Who cares?

Honestly, at this moment, I think my greatest fear of dying is over. I am completely grateful for being kept alive. I'm sure these guys would have killed me if it wasn't for my tits and cluelessness.

Now that I consider it, these guys kept giving me odd looks, like they were trying to figure something out about me. I shouldn't be that hard to figure out, I suppose, but with my theatrics, they probably thought of me as some kind of alien.

Lying on my back, I realized I had to face yet another fear.

"I'm bored."

\* \* \*

><p>Boredom is a cruel master, methinks. I mean, there was nothing in this room, save for a bed, a window, and, well, floor, ceiling, and walls.</p>

Man, this place bites. Being alive is great and all, but I'd like some entertainment. To be honest, I'm still too shy to talk to the guards. They keep giving me weird looks.

I was on my back again, staring at the ceiling, my head trying desperately to figure what to do. Normally, in these situations, I'd daydream crazy stuff, mostly to add into my novels later to develop. However, I had nothing to write with, so I was basically without a means to record all my dreams.

I was too nervous to ask for pen and paper, err, quill and parchment, umm, whatever they use to write here!

My days here were mostly just sleep, eat, go to the bathroom, stare at ceiling, stare out window, slowly dying of boredom.

Ah, boredom. How long must I keep you company?

Strange things happen when I'm bored. I get desperate; I look for entertainment in everything I do. In fact, just the other day I started playing with one of the flowers, pretending it was a person going to the super market.

Dear God, the look on the kid's face when it was his turn to guard me!  
\* \* \*

><p>Day 40 of my imprisonment. At least I think it is. I lost track long ago.<p>

Boredom was like a lost dog, refusing to leave me alone. Finally, my nerves at end, I began to pace in the room, looking like a tiger in a cage. I felt like one, even. There was nothing to do, nothing to see and hear, whatever. Turning on my heel, I puzzled over how I could get out of this predicament.

Obviously, these men didn't trust me. A big duh! on my part. I had broken into song in order to explain something so odd to these old relicas. They didn't know anything about computers or modern day education, etc. I'm just glad they didn't sweat over this much. I think they all were reeling from the shock of my gender.

Plus, lately these days I began to think about the life I left behind. My parents were probably worried sick. I know my dad would be worried over what had happened. He was always so punctual over me calling him every week.

My mom will call the police, and everyone will scurry around, looking desperately for me. My step dad will lead the search, and my dad will get on TV and yell at the cameras, demanding the kidnappers to return me safely before he puts a bullet in their thick skulls.

I nearly laughed aloud. My dad was always so wacky. He even told me he would personally hunt down my kidnapper and make sure he never saw the light of day! Wait.

I stopped mid stride, a frown on my lips. These thoughts about my dad! why was I having them suddenly? No, that wasn't it. Why was I having so much of my thoughts occupied with my dad? This just made me feel weird, like I wasn't supposed to think so much about this.

Speaking of which, why was I feeling like I had forgotten something vital.

"You know," a voice suddenly said, startling me. I jerked upright and whirled to see Red's face peering through the opening that made my window. "We never really figured out if we would keep you inside here the entire time."

"Yeah, you never did," I replied back, my mind retreating into its metaphorical turtle shell. He gave me a charming smile, which, let me tell ya, that was enough to make me wanna scream, "LEMME HUG YOU!"

But I didn't. Dear God, please save me from my womanly urges!

"Well," he didn't seem to notice my internal struggle, "Hijikata-san is calling a meeting to figure that out. Best if I bring you in so you know what's coming, right?"

I couldn't help but breathe, "Better than being stuck in this room any longer." He offered his hand to me, no ropes. I couldn't help myself; I was giddy. I took his hand, which I noticed was bandaged. His own hand was bandaged, too. Maybe to help with friction? I don't know, but I didn't ask. I just let this guy take me wherever he wanted to take me.

Damn this time of the month.

\* \* \*

><p>"We've decided that you need to work if you're going to continue staying here," was the words that came from Mr. Scary Looking Guy's mouth.</p>

I didn't protest. In fact, I was relieved. While I might hate chores, if it took me out of that room, gave me SOMETHING to do, I would take anything.

Well, save for cleaning toilets. I had a limit, ya know.

"Oh, come on, Hijikata-san," chortled the troll. I glanced over my shoulder at him. I still didn't like him, but my damn hormones kept betraying me.

Damn these hot men and their Adam's apples.

He continued when he got Mr. Scary Looking Guy's attention, which meant I nearly missed his next words; "Didn't we agree that she'd be your page?"

Page, what? Halt, Sir Troll-a-lot, but I wasn't informed of carrying some dude's sweaty uniform aroundâ€¦ Uhh, that was what pages did, right?

"Souji," the look the scary guy was giving the troll sent chills down my back, "how many times have I said it? I. Am not. Taking her. As my damn page!"

Yes, good sir, tell him you refuse. In fact, I couldn't resist speaking these words; "Yeah, bro. If you want to make me a page so badly, why don't you make me your page?"

The troll gave me such a look that, in my gloating spirit, I had to take him in completely, so I turned my whole body to face him. Grinning, I continued, "Unless, of course, if thou ist too holier for thine peasant bosoms, then I shalt be-ith a burden to thy superior tastes."

Then there was laughter. Red, Mr. Muscles and the kid burst out laughing at the expense of the troll, as his face literally did a one-eighty after I, basically, told him off.

Behind me, the scary guy spoke, "Well, I suppose that settled things. Souji, you get her." I could tell he was definitely amused.

"What?" The troll was obviously baffled; after all, how did his precious joke turn on him? "What am I supposed to do with a page?"

"You are the captain of the first squad," Bangs replied coolly. This entire time he was completely unfazed by everything going on. "Surely you can find something for her to do."

"Or ya still thinking of what she did before?" Mr. Muscles teased. That reminder caused the troll to get a rush of red on his face before he retorted, "Shinpachi, that was low! I wasn't thinking of that at all!"

"You are now~" I sang, wiggling my finger at him. Let's all pounce on the troll, I think. He desires it. When he turned to me, he gave me a hard, green eyed glare, to which I responded back with a smug grin back.

I ain't scared of you, I thought to him. Give me your worse.

And finally, Spike gave the final order. "Now, now, everyone. We're all a little tired. Souji, I think it would be best if you did take a page. She seems resourceful enough, don't you think?"

"I'll do my best!" I chirped, turning to look at Spike, wearing the biggest, cheesiest grin I could make. He seemed to buy my oversugary attitude, as he clapped, cheering, "See? Souji, now you have a new friend!"

And you, my friend, are extremely gullible, I thought. But I love you for it, Spikey.

And as for the trollâ€| Welcome to hell.

## 6. In which Cody sees text boxes

\*\*\*In which Cody starts to see text boxes and animals in her head\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>And so, I begin my newest adventures as the troll's page! And I still don't know what that means.</p>

Actually, a lot more than that happened. See, after my song struck an apparent cord with everyone, they had to take some time to figure exactly what to do with me. Well, after making me the troll's page, I was also given some â€| additional orders.

Firstly, I was given that sword I had at the beginning of this whole adventure. Honestly, I didn't mind the thing being taken from me. Like I said before, it's useless to me. But I was already heavily watched as it were, so I just nodded my head and went with it.

I had a lot of catching up to do if I can get these guys to trust me. That's my plan, actually. A lame one, granted, but if it manages to get me back home, I'm not complaining. They had agreed not to kill me, but they weren't letting me off the hook.

Speaking of hook, another thing I had to agree to was to continue pretending to be a boy. I really didn't see the point of the order, since, well, I am a tomboy, but again, I nod and smile.

I was also forbidden to leave my room without an escort. The escort, of course, had to be one of the dudes I met, and they had to get permission from the head hancho. The only exception, as I kindly pointed out to them, was if I had to go to the bathroom. (I also got an answer on how long I've been here. A week. A WHOLE FREAKIN' WEEK! I'm gonna faintâ€¡)

Either way, it doesn't seem to affect my daily staring at the ceiling, as the troll keeps coming up with excuses on not asking me to do stuff, even the basic, simple stuff.

"I'm too busy."

"Ah, so-and-so can do that."

"You're too inexperienced to do that."

"Maybe another time."

Well, excuse me, princess. I didn't know you suffered from OCD. Still, it wasn't that bad. The other guys began to talk to me again. It seemed me talking back to the troll had earned me some brownie points, or at least perked their interests. Methinks the troll was notorious for being mischievous here, so it's little wonder why they'd take interest in a punk kid being sassy with him.

Red and Kid were the most engaging, asking me things about what my life was like before I came here. I kept things to bare bone detail, or at least tried to use words that didn't shock them, but they obviously still remembered my song and kept asking about me. Man, now I know how a parent feels when they tell the kid, "You'll know when you're older."

Bangs was as silent as ever, but Baldy and Mr. Muscles at least talked a bit (Baldy was even teaching me how to play Go. You know, like that game in that one manga?). But they were only friendly company I got. This place, as I soon found out, was a headquarters for the "Shinsengumi." That's the organization everyone belongs to. Not that I knew what that meant, but hey, whatever.

Anyway, the guys I met thus far were the ones in charge. The troll, Bangs, Baldy, Kid, Red, and Mr. Muscles were all captains, while Mr. Scary Looking Guy and Glasses were second in command to Spike. Everyone else were just plain o' foot soldiers.

And here's the not-so-nice company I was getting to. Apparently, getting my own room and being escorted around like some delinquent made me the Bad Guy. Everyone just gave me the cold shoulder whenever I came in eye sight.

Well, honestly, I wanted to say, "Fuck you, too," but hey, whatever, it's not my problem to deal with. I was either the circus monkey or the pain in the ass, both of which pretty much sucked. I just wanted to go home badly, but everyone here was making it impossible for me to leave. Couldn't I just go home?

But home made me think too much.

I noticed it subtly, like a shadow creeping up on me. It had begun the week after I was captured. My thought strangely had focused on my dad. Now, it was on my father and that sword I was given.

I suppose it is hard to explain, but it's like you're trying to remember something, a tip of the tongue phenomenon, yet another part of me was trying to dismiss those thoughts.

I know, crazy, right? Thing was, I was utterly confused on which part I should believe. I know from my past that if I'm trying to remember something, it is important. This nagging feeling will keep hitting me until I do something for it. And yet, I feel like I remembering something wrong. Like something isn't right with the memory.

I mean, I know my memory is bad, but this bad? To the point where I remember events wrong? Important events, such as the whereabouts of my father and why I'm here.

Yet still, I get this strange feeling I am supposed to be here, in Kyoto (Red told me what city I was in, thank God), looking for something. And I think that something is my old man.

Yet why? I'm sure my father isn't here. I can't explain why, but I get this sad feeling in my chest whenever I think of my dad. Maybe it has something to do with being here in Kyoto? Maybe I bumped into the Doctor, who told me I had to save my father from a Dalek who had sent him into 19th century Kyoto? Unlikely, since both were fictional, but who knows?

A chill ran down my spine, breaking me from my wild, untamed thoughts. This is what I get for being stuck here. But seriously, do they expect me to just sit here and do nothing? The least they could do is giving me something to do in this room.

The frame of the door caught my sight as I looked around for the spare jacket I was given to stay warm. Holding the jacket in my hand, I mused at the door. This last week or so had been rather quiet, with my friendly guards frequenting my room less and less. This meant there were moments where I was completely alone (which meant these were honestly the most boring times ever).

I guess that my good behavior warranted some privacy. That, or maybe they were confident I couldn't find my way out of this compound. I had, to annoy the troll, pretended I was incapable of finding my way out of a paper bag, and I just sorta assumed that feature, although with less sarcastic comments. Better I not show my full hand to people who I don't trust, and whom I'm pretty sure don't trust me.

Either, I was alone. Maybe, just maybeâ€¦ I can sneak out and have some fun?

Three choices appeared in my head. I could be a good guy, listen to the big scary boogie man and stay put. Or I could see if I could find someone to talk to. Or I could do the devil's route and explore this place.

Honestly, staying here did not appeal to me, but hey, safety is a good thing. Besides, what if Mr. Scary Looking Guy finds me? I don't know what I'll do if I get caught snooping around.

Although I could, if I'm caught, use the excuse that I was lonely and just wanted some company. Play myself off as a helpless and hapless victim of circumstance, showcase those irresistible puppy dog eyes I have.

And if I'm not caught, I can scamper around and get a better idea of where I am exactly. Who knows? Maybe all I need to stop these crazy thoughts was get a good bit of fresh air.

â€œ| Wait. Why only three options? Why didn't I think of escaping or something of that nature? I mean, come on. This was be a good chance to at least scope around and determine my plan of escape.

Shaking my head, I chased the thoughts out of my head. Whether or not I would find a way out of this place, I needed fresh air. I was becoming delusional; there were little text boxes in front of my eyes with my three options floating in front of me.

Sliding the door open, I slipped the jacket on and stepped outside. Fresh air, here I come.

I followed the hallway I had walked down so many times into the main hall, where all the guys were normally hanging out. Today, however, it was surprisingly empty.

"Huh." I couldn't help it; I let the word slip out. Covering my mouth up immediately, my eyes flickered back and forth. No one suddenly appeared. Not a peep could be heard.

Breathing out a sign, I leaned against the wall. My heart was pounding against my chest in panic. I had nearly given myself a heart attack, over one little word.

I really am going crazy, I mused to myself. I just hope I don't develop Stockholm's syndrome. That would bad, really bad.

However, I didn't get too far down my scary thoughts, because I heard a noise. Panic once again settling in, I tensed, listening. It was coming from outside, and it sounded like people whispering to one another.

Now, you all probably think, "Cody, there are people outside whispering. You should high tail it out of there." And you know, you're right. The logical thing to do would be to flee from the scene.

Unfortunately, my brain doesn't like logic, sometimes. At least when it comes to having fun, or hell, even satisfying this evil little thing called "Curiosity."

Ah, yes, my old nemesis. So we meet again? You're going to get me into trouble, aren't you?

Of course, with my brain in its delusional state, I imagine my curiosity being represented by a little black cat wearing a top hat and monocle. Its whiskers twitched with amusement, and then, with a

British accent, cried, "Telly-ho!"

Telly-ho yourself, asshat.

Still, that didn't stop my body from doing what Curiosity said. I peeked outside, only to find, to my surprise, Red and Mr. Muscles were standing there, looking likeâ€|

They weren't supposed to be there?

Did they have little black cats with top hats and monocles? Nah, probably not, but still, it was amusing to think about. Soon, Curiosity was replaced with Mischief, who, for the sake of culture, was represented as a little red fox with a bandit mask and gloves. Chuckling deviously, Mischief beckoned me to ask that one little, oh-so annoying question every sister asks her secretive brothersâ€|

"What 'cha doin'?"

"Whaâ€" Mr. Muscles was the first to react, jerking into a stance before noticing it was just little o' me. I bet I didn't look all that intimidating, smiling sweetly with, I hope, an innocent look in my eyes. Red turned to look at me, slightly surprised, but not as much as Mr. Muscles.

Giving me a look that I could best describe as suspicion, Red replied calmly, "I could ask you the same question. Aren't you supposed to be in your room?"

Immediately, both Curiosity and Mischief ran inside their burrows. Dammit, I wasn't thinking, was I? Now I had gotten caught, by my own volition.

Best. Ninja. Of the year. (Note, to those of you reading this, that was sarcasm.)

"Ummmm," I dragged out, my brain racing desperately for an answer. Red arched an eyebrow at me, and that's when it hit me.

"I needed some air," I replied smoothly, staring directly at him. When he inclined his chin slightly, I decided to get back, with Mischief sticking his furry, red face out of the burrow, giving a toothy grin. "Now that I answered your question, answer mine. What are you doing?"

Red smiled, his hands on his hips. "Ah, needing some air? You could have just opened your window, you know?"

He's not going down without a fight, I see. Two can play at this game. Clicking my tongue, I waved my finger in front of him. "Uh-uh, I answered your question. Now you have to answer mine. It's only fair."

Chuckling, Red grinned. "'Only fair,' huh? Well, whatever. We're heading to Shimabara, if you want to know."

I frowned. "I don't understand. What's Shimabara?"

It was Red's turn to shake his finger at me, smiling mischievously.

"It's 'only fair' if you answer my question, right?"

Ah, my own strategy, backfiring at me. You're good, Red. But you haven't beaten me yet. Crossing my arms, I shrugged. "Say what you will, but just opening the window doesn't relieve someone of my caliber of boredom. Besides, you can't fix cabin fever with just opening a window. I needed to stretch my legs, feel the breeze on my ankles and toes. And, last time I checked, dangling them out and pretending to walk in place is something frowned upon in this society."

Red let out a bark of laughter. "Ah, true true. I can't argue that." Glancing at Mr. Muscles, who was constantly looking around, as if he was expected something to jump out and grab him, Red then continued, "Shimabara is a red light district. Ya know what those are, right?"

Red-light district? Well, I don't necessary know any place I know of where I come from with that title, but it did ring as familiar to me. Pausing for a moment to think, I remembered once in a class I was taking where they used the term "red-light district."

"Ah, yeah, I know what those are," I replied, nodding.

Mr. Muscles, however, didn't seem to like my answer, or Red's cooperation, for that matter. "Sano, what are you doing?" he asked. "You can't go telling a girl that we're going to Shimabara."

"He's got a point," I mused. "That's like telling a girl you're going to a strip club. But hey, so as long as it isn't your girlfriend or a feminist, it's fine, I suppose."

Red looked between me and Mr. Muscles, shrugging. "You know me, Shinpachi. I can't lie. Besides, we're not doing anything wrong."

"Not you, maybe. You're just tagging along to drink."

Aha! So that's why Mr. Muscles' panties were all up in a twist. He's planning on doin' the naughties.

Although, I have to say, Red gets points from me. It's not every day you meet a guy who goes into a no-no zone just for a drink. Most guys say they just go for the drinks, but if it's one of his own buddies who rat him out, it's gotta be the truth. Color me impressed.

Still, something bugged meâ€¦

"But it's afternoon," I mumbled, looking up at the sky. The sun was far from setting, but it was nowhere near the morning anyway. Besides, I already had my breakfast and lunch, but no dinner.

Yeah, yeah, I use food as a way to tell time. So sue me. Potato clocks for the win!

"Isn't that every man's dream? Drinking in the afternoon, that is," Red asked me. I shrugged. I had no idea what dreams men had. I was a woman, after all.

"Still," I continued, unconvinced, "drinking in the afternoon is

unusual." Where I came from, drinking any time except weekends was frowned upon. Where I come from, people went to bars only to get drunk. And during the weekdays, when you had to work, that was simply a no-go.

Although, who am I to say who can and can't do things? I'm just a kid locked up, with no idea what is going on.

However, for once Mr. Muscles seemed to agree with me. "Yeah, I get your point. Drinking so early isn't appropriate."

I looked up at him, my eyebrow arched. If he agreed with me, then why was he going? Did Red coerce him into going? But that didn't make sense, if it was Mr. Muscles, not Red, who was planning on doing more than drinking.

My answer came in the form of Mr. Muscles' next statement. "But you see, Kyoto's been getting pretty dangerous lately. We can't go out like normal people anymore."

I continued to stare as Mr. Muscles got into a dramatic pose and declared, "To hell with what's appropriate! Men gotta live! We gotta party whenever we feel like it, so as long as we're alive!"

I wanted to laugh. Really, I wanted to. It's sometimes so hard to see these guys as people when they're acting also as my jailors.

Oh, man, I really hope I'm not developing Stockholm's, here. I'm starting to sympathize with the enemy.

Just then, the Kid popped up. He paused upon catching sight of me, before asking, "Oh, Cody, are you coming, too?"

I laughed, waving my hand dismissively. "As much as I love to get outside this compound, I don't think I'm given that liberty just yet."

His face fell a bit once I said that. I gotta admit, even when acting like a guard, Kid was still pretty sweet. Honestly, he was cute, what with his teal colored eyes always being bright, his long, bouncy brown ponytail that swung all over the place.

Tilting my head, I gave Kid a small smile. "Well, I can assume you're going to Shimabara, right?"

Tensing at my light jab, Kid opened his mouth to say something before looking away with embarrassment. "I-I'm not going for the girls. I just want to hang out with Shinpattsuan and Sano-san!"

"I see." I kept my voice light and smooth, although I was still smiling. Mischief was practically foaming at the mouth (I haven't forgotten this little guy), wanting so badly to fulfill his namesake.

But I never really got a chance, because Kid then turned to me and asked, "Hey, uhhâ€œ you never called me by my name, ya know?"

It was my turn to tense. Ugh, that's right. Because I knew none of these guys' names, nor did I ever bother asking them, I had just tried to avoid all forms of names when speaking to them. But being

caught in such an embarrassing light, I coughed, mumbling, "I, uh, have difficulty remembering names."

"Huh?" Kid leaned forward, cocking his head to the side. "What 'cha say? I couldn't hear you."

Still mumbling, I repeated my sentence. Kid suddenly pulled back, looking at me with shock and surprise. I shrugged.

"Hey," I added, "in my defense, I still have difficulty remembering one of my former roommates' names. Names and faces just never seemed to match for me."

Red looked at me with surprise. "Gee, how can you survive without knowing our names?"

Mr. Muscles groaned, face palming. "Please tell me you can at least tell us apart!"

I laughed. "To be honest, I had trouble. Well, I'd have trouble if you went into a crowd of people and asked me to find you. I sometimes wonder what my own mother looks like. It's really, really bad, let me tell you." Glancing between the three, I then leaned forward a bit, lowering my voice a bit, "But I find it a lot easier to remember people if I give them a nickname based off a prominent feature."

"Oh?" Mr. Muscles and Red looked at me with interest while Kid asked, "Nicknames? Did you give us any?"

Oh, Kid, you don't even know the half of it. Still, I feel bad about disclosing their nicknames. I don't think "Red" or "Mr. Muscles" were bad nicknames, but Kid clearly didn't want to be called one, if I remember our very first encounter correctly. So I replied, carefully, "Yeah, I did. Not that it matters. Now that the cat's out of the bag, I might as well learn your real names."

Mr. Muscles wasn't having any of this change of subject, however. "Now hang on," he said. "I wanna know what you've been calling me this entire time."

"It doesn't matter, though," I countered. "I only called you that in my head. I never mentioned any of you when I was with the other guards."

Red nodded. "True. You were more focused on the situation or even just general information about this place. Although," he had that smile on his face again, "I think it's 'only fair' if you tell us our nicknames if we tell you our names."

I blinked, taken aback. "Wha?"

Red laughed suddenly. "I was kidding. You don't have to tell us. Even if I'm curious, I doubt you can do any harm with nicknaming people."

Sighing, I touched my burning forehead. "Gee, don't give me a heart attack, kay? I just used the nicknames so I could tell you all apart."

Bouncing in front of me, Kid grinned from ear to ear. "Is it okay if I give you a nickname, Cody?"

"Uhh, sure? I suppose so. Knock yourself out."

"Kay." He pondered only for a moment before announcing his choice. "How about Tomo? It can mean 'friend,' and it's a better name to use in front of the soldiers than Cody."

Crossing my arms, I nodded. "Not a bad choice. Although, I gotta ask why the name meaning 'friend?'"

Scratching the back of his head, Kid coughed awkwardly before turned to face me. "Well, I-uh, you're going to be here awhile, so why not be friendly to each other? We get along fine whenever I had to escort you, right?"

"Guess so."

"Well," Mr. Muscles said, crossing his arms with a wide smile. "I guess I should play along, too."

Red nodded in agreement. "Yeah. Tomo's an easier name to use among the soldiers. You act pretty much like a boy, whether you try to or not, so just having a more normal sounding name will maybe ease the soldiers a bit more."

"Right!" Kid pranced a bit. "So, let's get working on our introductions. I'm Toudou Heisuke. Pleased to meet you, Cody!"

"Heisuke," I repeated, looking directly at him. He nodded eagerly in response. "Just call me Heisuke, kay? Everyone else does."

"And I'm Nagakura Shinpachi!" Mr. Muscles declared, fixing his oh-so-wonderful muscles like a champion.

"Shinpachi," I repeated, nodding. Red and Heisuke grinned while Shinpachi flinched a bit, before he too, broke into a smile.

"Something wrong?" I asked before he waved dismissively.

"S'okay. Normally superiors are addressed with honorifics, but I'll make an exception with you." Shinpachi nodded, as if he discovered something amazing. "You're so cute when you said my name. I can't say no to that!"

"San, kun, and chan are honorifics, right?" I asked. When I got a confirmation nod from Shinpachi, I continued, "Then I'll just call you Shinpachi-san. That's proper, right?"

"You don't have to, though," Shinpachi replied, grinning. "Well, maybe around the other captains, but not around us. It's cool."

"Oh, Shinpattsuan, don't be making any moves on Cody, okay?" Heisuke blurted out, looking offended. Shinpachi snorted, glaring at the smaller guy. "Please, I'm not making any moves on her. We're just being friendly."

I heard Red laughing from behind me. I didn't see him as he moved and slung his arm over my shoulder. Meeting my eyes, he smiled playfully. "Besides, it just wouldn't be right if we teased you dressed as a boy. However, when you're back looking like a girl!"

Before I could even give a word of protest, Heisuke interjected, cheering, "Yeah! I bet you would really cute. Once things settle down, you could start dressing normally again."

I opened my mouth to stay something, only to stop myself. I couldn't really tell these guys I was a tomboy, could I? Heisuke seemed so eager, and Red didn't look like he had any bad intentions in mind. Even Shinpachi seemed to be liking the idea, judging by the expression he has on his face.

Besides, there were other things I had worry about. Like getting home. What if I went home before things "settled down?" Talk about a downer.

And yet, I couldn't bring up either of these issues in the end. I know, talk about a one-eighty. One second I'm plotting my grand escape, cursing these men with all my heart, and then the next I want to give them a hug.

My head is starting to hurt again.

"I'll see what I can," I mumbled half-hearted, hoping the girl dress in this time wasn't too frilly. I think I might kneel over dead if I have to wear make-up. "No promises, but I'll give it a shot."

"We'll hold you to that," Red stated, smiling. Something seemed to flash in his eyes quick, and then he gave an embarrassed smile. "Ah, here I've been chatting with you all willy-nilly, and yet I didn't give you my name yet, huh?"

I nodded, returning the smile. I couldn't help it; Red's such an easy guy to get along with. I mean, you gotta admit, what's there not to like? He's not like the troll or Mr. Scary Looking Guy. He's actually pretty cool!"

"I'm Harada Sanosuke," Red finished.

"Right." I nodded my head. I looked out the entrance, before turning around. "Well, I better not hold you bros any longer. Have fun at the naughty place, ya hear?"

"Cody?"

"Hmm?" I turned to see Sanosuke looking at me with a serene look on his face.

"I'll get you something while we're out," he continued. "Is there any type of food you'd like?"

Food? You mean the wonderful nom-noms outside of porridge and fish and vegetables? Yes, I'd love any type of solid, edible fruit you can bring me, so as long as it doesn't have any bugs inside it and it doesn't remind of those pitiful meals I've been ingesting for the last few weeks.

Or, that what I wanted to say to him, but I decided, in all my ever present grace, to cut him some slack and ask for something simple. "Any kind of sweet will do, really. Just, uhh, nothing sour. I got a low tolerance to everything sour or bitter."

Sanosuke gave a small, short laugh and nodded.

Heisuke, on the other hand, had his eyes full of determination, quickly beating his chest once as he declared, "Once Hijikata-san gives you permission to go outside, we'll take you wherever you want to go."

Don't make that promise, Heisuke, I warned mentally. I might want to go to L.A. and Walt Disney World all in one day. Actually, that would sound wonderful. Too bad there aren't any planes in the 19th century.

Just when I thought my time was up and I had to get going, Shinpachi suddenly sucked in his breath, and I heard another voice sounding from behind me.

"And just where do you think you're going?"

Without even having to turn around, I knew from the look of the guys that I was in deep shit.

"â€| Ah, fuck."

## 7. Bad News and Good News

\*\*\*In which Cody exits stage left\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"â€| Ah, fuck," were the only words I could barely mumble under my breath as I heard sandals slapping the ground behind me. Please, please let it not be Mr. Scary Looking Guy.<p>

Now that I thought about it, it didn't sound like him, and when I heard Sanosuke grumble, "It just had to be Gen-sanâ€|"

Gen-san? Who dat? That's when I turned to see Baldy heading towards us.

At first, I wanted to sigh in relief. Baldy was a nice enough of a guy (he was one of the few who actually voted for me to be spared in the beginning), so you could say I had a bit of a soft spot for him. Besides, he's practically armless, minus the swords he wore on his sides.

Come on! You have to believe me! He looks like one of those fun uncles you're really eager to see at your birthday party when you've twelve because you know he's gonna sneak you extra birthday cake and give you money AND a birthday gift.

So you could say I had no worries when seeing Baldy coming up to us. However, another look at the guys told me I probably should be worried.

Or maybe Baldy no likey strip clubs, hmm?

"Uhh, weâ€"" Heisuke began, but his tongue seemed to have stopped operating mid-sentence. Pity began to swell in my chest at the defeated look on his face.

Honestly, who in their right minds could say no to that? He's practically begging for a knight in shining armor to come and save his ass.

Lucky for him, I got a straight A in Knight-in-Shining-Armor archetypes in high school.

"We were just talking, sir," I broke in cheerfully. My charm seemed to work on Spike, why not Baldy?

He glanced over in my direction, arching an eyebrow. "Really? What about?"

Oops. I forced my face to stay happy, despite inside I was panicking over thinking of a possible topic we could have engaged in that had nothing to do with strip clubs.

One word kept sticking in my head, as my eyes slowly wandered to Baldy's swords. "Swords?"

God! I sound so meek and unsure! He'll never believe me now!

"Yeah, swordplay!" Heisuke intervened suddenly. "We were explaining our training exercises to Cody here, you see?"

Heisuke, can I say that I hereby take back everything negative I have said or thought about you?

Shinpachi joined in, adding, "Yeah, 'cuz we were going to train, and Cody here wanted to know more about it. You know how she loves asking questions, right?"

Shinpachi, you are smarter than you look. You are not only Mr. Muscles but Mr. Quick, too. Baldy was even buying their bullshit, fast.

"Wonderful," he replied, smiling. "Well, if you have plans on training, do you mind if I join you?"

Oh dear God, guys, just say yes! You can go get lap dances later! Shinpachi and Heisuke looked alarmed by this statement. Even Sanosuke, who had yet to say anything to Baldy, looked like Baldy had just said something insane. Oh, how their plans had magnificently backfired on them.

I'll be honest. If I were truly a sadist and cared nothing for these guys, I would have thrown more fire wood into the fireplace. But, alas, I'm too nice of a person. Against my inner mischief, I said something that I hoped would get them out of this jam.

"Uh, before you go, can someone lead me back to my room? I got lost on the way from the bathroom."

Perfect. The guys' eyes widened in realization of what I just did. Come on, you idiots. Take the bait. I know not all three of you can take me back, but maybe you can come up with something on the fly!

"I'll take you back," Heisuke announced. "You guys can just train without me."

"Now hold on," Sanosuke interrupted, a look of mischief in his yellow eyes, "if this young lady is having problems just getting back and forth from the bathroom to her room, maybe showing her around the key places here would be beneficial?"

"Huh?" Of course, Heisuke was clueless as to the reason why Sanosuke offered such a thing. Although I was by no stretch of the imagination was complaining.

Sanosuke, you are the most beautiful and wonderful creature on the face of the earth. I love you more than you will ever know, so never change. But just don't let that get to your head, as I'm still mad you managed to outsmart me with my own logic, kay?

Shinpachi, however, was not having any of this. "What the hell, you guys?" he snapped as the two came over to me and took my hands. "I had expected Heisuke to pull something like this, but you, too, Sano?"

"Now, now," Baldy interjected. "Harada-kun has a good point. Toudou-kun, Harada-kun, take care of the young lady, will you?"

"Will do, Gen-san," Heisuke chirped as he and Sanosuke began dragging me away. Dipping his head low enough to reach my ear (as Sanosuke was really, really tall), Sanosuke whispered, "Time to go now!"

"Why?" I whispered back. Heisuke answered my question with his own hushed answer. "Shinpattsuan's got a bit of a temper!"

"Ah." I nodded. "Well, then, off to an adventure, eh?"

Yes, away from the loud, masculine voice of the Wicked Witch of the West, who, although wasn't threatening to off me and my precious dog, too, was having none of us getting to escape scott-free.

You know what? I'll say this once.

I'm starting to love this place.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well, I hate to end on this note, I really do. But I have some bad news.<strong>

\*\*I'm ending this version of The Misadventures of a Foreigner. Yes, ending it. I'm actually not happy with something that is key in the plot, so I have to change up the entire thing.\*\*

\*\*However, the good news is I am revamping TMoAF, under the same title, with duel protagonists, Cody and Chizuru. Yes, so now we get the snarkiness of Cody, and the overall level-headed of Chizuru.

They'll do well together, amirite?\*\*

\*\*I will explain further, once I post the first chapter of the new TMoaf, why I decided to do this. But don't worry, I'll keep this story up for your entertainment. I look forward to seeing you in the new version of TMoaf, which is posted now! Bye bye!\*\*

End  
file.